

How the Brave New World Arrives by orphan_account

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Language: English

Characters: Dustin Henderson, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Holly Wheeler, Karen Wheeler, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Ted Wheeler, Will Byers

Relationships: Maxine "Max" Mayfield/Lucas Sinclair, Will Byers/Mike Wheeler

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Summary:

It's Christmas 1989, and Mike and Will's presents for each other are absolutely perfect.

1. Part One - Christmas

December 24th, 1989

“Hey, Mike?” Mike turned to see Will standing in the doorway adjoining the kitchen and the living room with a familiar mischievous grin on his face. Mike shot him a questioning look and Will glanced upwards. Mike rolled his eyes good-humouredly – there was mistletoe hanging from the doorpost. “Go on,” said Will, lowering the timbre of his voice a fraction, making Mike shiver. *Get a grip*, he thought.

“Oh, screw it.” Mike threw up his hands in defeat, realising that his mother was upstairs putting Holly to bed, his father was out at the country club’s late-night Christmas drinks, and Nancy was out with Jonathan. He crossed the room in a heartbeat, held Will’s face in his hands and kissed him. Will was slightly taken by surprise at his co-operation but responded with ardour, closing his eyes, placing his hands on Mike’s waist and pressing into him. Will felt Mike’s mouth ease open, and took his cue, tasting the chocolate that Mike had been snacking on earlier. Suddenly he felt Mike freeze under his touch; he pulled back, looking worriedly into his boyfriend’s face, but Mike’s eyes were wide and fixed on the ceiling. A stair creaked. Immediately Will shot to the other end of the kitchen and made a pretence of washing his hands at the sink, just as Karen Wheeler appeared at the bottom of the stairs. She flashed them a smile before glancing at the clock.

“What time is your mother expecting you back, Will?” she asked.

Will shrugged. “She’s not, really, but I might take off shortly. It’s kind of late, and I’m pretty tired.”

“Okay, let me know when you’re ready, and I’ll drop you home.”

“That’s alright, Mom,” Mike said hurriedly. “I’ll take him.”

“You sure, honey?” She looked surprised.

“Yeah, it’s probably better if you’re here. In case, you know, Holly

comes looking for Santa,” he added for good measure. Will laughed, and she joined in.

“You’re probably right,” she admitted. “By the way, Will, we’re hosting a New Year’s party. You and your family are all invited, of course.”

“Thanks, Mrs Wheeler,” he started. “I don’t know about the others, but I probably won’t come. I hope you don’t mind, it’s just I really don’t like fireworks.”

“Oh, don’t worry, sweetie, I’m not offended. I understand,” she said kindly. Will smiled at her gratefully.

“Can we go now, Mike?” He nodded and took his keys from their hook by the basement door.

“See you in a bit, Mom.”

“Take a jacket,” she said sharply, nodding approvingly at Will, who was pulling on a sweater, a coat, a hat, a long scarf, his snow boots and a pair of gloves. When he was finally ready, he braced himself and opened the front door.

“Night, Mrs Wheeler. Merry Christmas.”

“Good night, dear, and Merry Christmas.”

Once they were in the car, Mike paused before starting the car. “Are you really not coming for New Year’s?”

“No, I’m sorry,” he said softly. Mike’s face fell, and Will squeezed his hand.

“Guess we’ll have to do the New Year’s kiss now then.” Mike leaned over the gearshift to continue where they’d left off, but Will drew back, offering him an apologetic look.

“Sorry, I’d just rather be kissing you anywhere except your freezing cold car.” Mike turned the ignition and jets of warm air shot out of the vents.

“Now?” he asked hopefully. Will laughed at his ridiculous boyfriend.

“Go on then,” he sighed, leaning forward to meet Mike in the middle.

Mike walked Will to the door, and Will put his key in the lock. Mike gave a small cough, and Will looked back to see him holding out a box untidily wrapped in green tissue paper. Will bit his lip to stop himself from laughing at his boyfriend’s predictably hopeless gift-wrapping skills.

“Merry Christmas,” he mumbled, blushing slightly. Will took it and kissed him on the cheek, before reaching inside and pulling out his own package, immaculately wrapped. “Showoff,” Mike grumbled, and Will laughed out loud at that, seeing that Mike wasn’t really cross.

“Will I see you tomorrow?” he asked, and Mike shrugged gloomily.

“No idea. Hope so, but can’t promise anything. I might be able to escape for a bit in the evening but otherwise it’s pure family hell for the whole day.”

“Good luck. I’ll be thinking of you.”

“Thanks. At least Nancy’ll be there,” said Mike, clearly trying to find a positive.

“A voice of reason if there ever was one,” Will said. He pulled the door to, and stepped forward to hug Mike, leaning into his chest. Mike smiled, lifting his heels and standing on tiptoe so he could rest his chin on Will’s head. He kissed Will on the forehead, squeezing his hand momentarily. “Merry Christmas, Mike.” And with that, he slipped inside the house and gently closed the door behind him. Mike shook the package lightly, then decided against opening it. He shivered slightly before turning back to his car, the fresh snow crunching beneath his feet.

The next morning it was still dark when Will woke. He glanced at his

alarm clock, and saw that it was just after seven. El was lying asleep on the campbed she always occupied when both Will and Jonathan were home, so Will decided to open Mike's present. He slowly tore the paper, taking care not to wake El, gasping quietly at what was underneath. It was Mike's beautiful lambswool scarf which Will was always stealing during winter and had secretly always wanted. However, Will's surprise deepened when he realised there was something else wrapped up within the scarf.

"Oil paints," he breathed in ecstasy. It was a deluxe box, with small tubes of fifteen different colours. He loved oil painting but generally could only afford to do it when he had to for his classes as they were not cheap. There was a note attached to the box of paints. *To be used in your classes under no circumstances.* Will let out a silent breath of laughter as he wound the scarf around his neck, breathing in its scent, which was so undeniably *Mike*.

A half hour earlier, Mike had woken up to an excited nine-year-old collapsing on him with her full weight.

"Mike, wake up, it's Christmas!"

"Merry Christmas, Holly," he groaned, switching on his bedside lamp and glancing at the clock on the wall. "It's six-thirty."

"But Santa's been!" She tugged playfully on his messy hair. He sighed, shifted into a sitting position and rubbed his eyes, conceding defeat.

"Alright." Well, if he wasn't permitted to sleep, he wasn't going to be the only one. "Go and wake Nancy and I'll meet you downstairs, okay?"

"Okay!" she shot out of the room and he heard her hammering on the door to the next room. He chuckled as he swung his legs out of bed, grabbing a pair of socks, his slippers and his robe. He stifled a yawn as he heard Holly clatter down the stairs. He met Nancy in the hallway, looking equally sleepy and dishevelled.

"Merry Christmas," he smirked. She gave him a murderous look, but couldn't hold it and smiled, shaking her head in disbelief at their younger sister.

"Merry Christmas, Mike." Holly opened all of her presents in five minutes, chattering away to Mike and Nancy as they came into the room with a cup of coffee each.

"Your turn now," she said excitedly, thrusting the nearest gift in Nancy's direction. She flipped over the tag, but Mike already recognised it.

"It's yours, Mike." She handed it over and Mike thumbed the tape open, not wanting to tear it.

He unfolded the wrapping paper to find a shoebox. He frowned, puzzled. *Surely Will didn't buy me shoes?* Nancy and Holly looked equally mystified. He lifted the lid and found inside a few smaller items, each with a small piece of card taped to it. The first was a mixtape with 'New Favourites' scribbled on the case; its note read *For when life is too quiet*. The second was a book about creatures from European mythology. On the inside cover, Will had written *For when you need inspiration*. Just underneath it was a notepad with alternating lined and plain paper. *For when you get inspiration!*, said its accompanying card. Two tubes of Smarties were next, and their card made Mike laugh – *For when you're bored and pretend you're hungry*. Next was a developed photograph of the two of them from Thanksgiving weekend, walking through the woods holding hands and laughing. On the back Will had written *For when you're feeling sad*. Mike placed it face down on the carpet, out of Holly's reach, then pulled out a tiny plastic sword in confusion. He scanned the note with it, which said *For when you feel like you're less brave than you are*.

He didn't see the final one until he'd removed all of the others. however, which made Mike's vision blur with tears. It was a piece of thick card lining the bottom of the shoebox, with *For when you forget how beautiful you are to me* written on the back. His heart thudding in his chest, he lifted it out and flipped it over to look at it. It was a hand-drawn picture of him. Well, he supposed it was him, but somehow Will had made him look so much more attractive than he

thought he was. His cheeks were burning and he realised he must have turned crimson. He took a deep breath and put everything back in the box, smiling at his sisters.

“That looks boring,” said Holly, wrinkling her nose and turning her attention back to the Christmas tree. Mike smiled knowingly at Nancy; Holly could not have been more wrong.

Notes for the Chapter:

As always, thanks if you're still reading; if you enjoyed, please leave a comment or hit me up on Tumblr (@teaforoneplease)!

Part 2 is coming - yes, we will be seeing the new year in with these two boys!

2. Part Two: New Year's Eve

Summary for the Chapter:

Mike's parents host a New Year's Eve party - but much to Mike's disappointment, Will isn't attending.

9:30pm

The Wheelers' New Year party was in full flow. There were guests everywhere – it seemed to Mike that half of Hawkins was crammed into their admittedly very spacious house. He, of course, was avoiding the majority of the festivities, and had sought refuge in the relative quiet of the basement, along with El, Dustin, Lucas and Max. They had swiped some beers for themselves (and a few cans of lemonade for El), and were chatting and watching the Times Square celebrations on the small television. Suddenly Lucas stood and muted the volume.

“I'd like to propose a toast,” he announced.

“Oh, god,” muttered El, who was tired and rather wanted to go home. Lucas ignored her.

“A new decade looms,” he continued dramatically. “And thanks again to Mike for hosting us.” Mike gave a wry smile.

“Is that it?” asked Dustin hopefully.

“No, of course not.” Max knew her boyfriend better than that.

“As all of you know, I'm normally very much down for a party.” A chuckle went around the room. “However, on this occasion I am very glad of not having to constantly associate with boring old people who think that Reagan leaving office is the start of the second coming of Christ.” At this everyone present genuinely laughed. “In addition, this party feels a little weird as our own Party is incomplete.” Mike felt a tug of sadness in the pit of his stomach. “So, toast number one – to 1990.”

“To 1990,” they echoed, and sipped their drinks.

“Toast number two – to Will.”

“To Will,” was the far more enthusiastic response, and they drained their drinks. Suddenly an alarm clock rang, and everybody groaned.

“Come on,” said Mike briskly. “You know the rule – after twenty minutes they start noticing we’re not there and get suspicious. Ten minutes upstairs pretending we like them, make eye contact with my parents at least once, then we can come back down.”

“Fine,” grumbled Dustin. “But we’re stealing more beer.”

Mike opened the basement door slightly and peered through the crack, looking for his parents.

“Coast is clear. Let’s go.” He opened the door a little more and let the others slip past him, before weaving unnoticed through the crowd and sauntering nonchalantly into the living room.

“Ah, Mike, there you are.” His mother darted between people chatting and was at his side in an instant. “We’re running short on lemonade, can you go get some more from the icebox in the garage?”

“Sure thing,” he said, relieved to have something to do.

“Thank you, sweetheart.” She flashed him a smile before starting a conversation with someone Mike didn’t know. He sighed; even after all these years, he didn’t understand how his parents still maintained their façade of being the perfect family in spite of the fact that they quite clearly couldn’t stand each other. Pulling on his shoes, he headed out and jogged the ten feet or so to the garage. He shivered, regretting not putting on a jacket; it was still freezing, and though the path was clear, there was still snow on the ground. He pulled open the garage door and went to the icebox behind his father’s car. He grabbed his cargo and ran out again, eager to get indoors. Once inside, he kicked off his shoes and dumped the bottles of lemonade unceremoniously on the kitchen counter.

“Careful, Mike,” said his father, not looking at him as he passed by.

Mike rolled his eyes and flipped him off behind his back before glancing at his watch. 9:43 – that meant he had twelve minutes to fill before the Party could safely reconvene. He sighed, forced a smile and braced himself for the inevitable questions about college, what a wonderful party it was, what his New Year’s resolution was, and why he didn’t yet have a girlfriend.

Only Max was downstairs when Mike arrived, turning the pages of a magazine, clearly seething.

“You okay?” She jumped and glanced up at him.

“Oh, it’s only you.” She threw it down and sighed. “Just your mom asking after my ‘charming’ brother.” Mike winced.

“Sorry.”

“Eh, it’s not your fault.” She tilted her head slightly as he sat down at the other end of the couch. “I still reckon I’m having a better night than you,” she added slightly more softly.

“Yeah,” said Mike gloomily. “At least your boyfriend’s here.”

“Will’s never liked fireworks, has he?”

“Well, he used to love them.” Mike smiled sadly as he remembered. “When he was little he was obsessed. ‘Bang-lights’, he called them.”

“Seriously?” Max grinned.

“Only when we were really little,” Mike added. “Although if he asks, I did not tell you that he didn’t learn the actual word until we were six.” Max sniggered, before sobering up a little.

“What happened?”

“The Upside Down,” Mike said bitterly. “He’s been jumpy ever since. The year before you came it was terrible: cars backfiring, gunshots, thunderstorms, doors slamming, almost anything would set him off.”

“I remember.” Max nodded slowly. “He’s better now though, isn’t he?”

"Oh, definitely, but he still hates fireworks. He watches them from his window, but he won't come here to see them." As Mike was speaking, the door opened and closed, and El appeared at the foot of the stairs.

"Can I go home now?" she whined.

"No," said Max for the fourth time. "It's not midnight." El groaned and flopped down on the couch between them, just as Lucas returned.

"God, I can't wait to get back to Portland." He opened another beer and swigged it, grimacing.

"Why do you drink that stuff if you don't even like it?" El asked, lobbing Mike's stress ball across the room.

"Because tonight, I need it." He coughed as he swallowed it too quickly, and Max laughed. Finally Dustin reappeared.

"That wasn't so bad," he said cheerfully.

"How come?" asked Mike suspiciously.

"Cause I didn't really talk to anyone, I just watched while your mom argue with Mr Jefferson about not bringing his dog inside."

"Kay," said Lucas, waving the clock. "Timer's set. We only have to do this, like, three more times. We can do it."

11:40

"Right," said Max gloomily, glancing at her watch as the alarm rang again. "Shall we?"

"Oh, screw it," said Mike, draining his beer and tossing the can into the trash. "Mom and Dad'll be outside sorting the fireworks by now, they won't notice we're gone."

"Thank God," said Dustin, glancing at El, who was curled up at the

end of the sofa, fast asleep. "I think El might kill us if we woke her."

"We'll have to go out for the fireworks," Mike added hesitantly, "but that won't start until it's actually midnight."

"Could we leave her?" suggested Dustin.

"Not when we go out," said Lucas firmly. "She'll freak out if the fireworks wake her and she's alone." Suddenly Mike heard the doorbell ring upstairs. Mike frowned up at the ceiling.

"Should you answer that?" Dustin asked Mike.

"Nah, Nancy'll get it." He stifled a yawn. A moment passed and then he heard it ring again.

"For God's sake," he muttered, cursing his sister's negligence. He stomped angrily up the stairs, offering old Mrs Warner an innocent smile as he emerged from the basement. He hated New Year's: the people, the pretence, the noise... And to top it all, he couldn't even spend it with Will. He weaved through the crowd of people, who were getting to the drunk end of tippy by this point, and opened the front door. Mike's heart just about stopped.

Will offered him a nervous smile. "Hey." Mike's mouth hung open by half an inch. "Can I come in?"

"Yes, of course." Mike was flustered, and almost tripped over his feet stepping back to let Will in. He gave Will a brief hug and managed to organise his thoughts enough to smile. "You... I mean... I..." He faltered and tried again. "You came." Will shrugged, beaming up at his boyfriend, before leaning in and lowering his voice.

"Figured it was about time we had our New Year's kiss." Mike's eyes widened and swallowed hard as he glanced around. No one had noticed. The corners of his mouth twitched upwards.

"Are you gonna be okay?" Will nodded, looking pleased with himself. He shrugged off his backpack, unzipped it and pulled out a Walkman and a massive pair of headphones. "Genius," Mike breathed, now

unable to hold back the grin that was fighting its way out of him. "Come on." They slipped through the thrum of people to the basement. As Mike opened the door, he turned to Will and put a finger to his lips.

"Who was it?" Dustin called up.

"Some kid playing Ding-Dong-Ditch, I think," said Mike, casually walking down whilst Will tiptoed behind him, but Lucas saw him.

"Will!" he yelled excitedly, jumping up. El started and woke as Max and Dustin followed suit, each of them leaping up and smothering Will in a hug. She didn't see Will at first, so, in a fit of irritation, levitated half a dozen pillows and sent them flying towards them.

"What the hell?" she demanded, but then Max stepped back and ruffled Will's hair, and El gasped, throwing off the blanket Dustin had put over her. "What are you doing here?"

"Changed my mind," he smiled, pulling her in and hugging her, before stepping back and slipping his hand into Mike's, whose cheekbones were tinged pink.

"Come on then," said Mike, who was suddenly more cheerful than he had been all evening. "Let's go watch these fireworks."

It was pitch black outside and bitterly cold. Mike and Will stood close together, a few feet back from the group of spectators, gloved hands intertwined and hidden from view. Will was blasting *Waiting For a Star to Fall* through his headphones – a little way off from his usual taste but El had got him into it. Besides, he could have it loud without it actually hurting his ears. Mike glanced down at him, and saw him gazing up at the fireworks with the same joy on his face that he'd had ten years ago. Mike's heart hurt with affection for his boyfriend. Suddenly people were counting down, and Mike glanced at his watch. *Ten...* His eyes were back on Will. *Nine...* He glanced at the crowd of people. *Eight...* He looked over at Max and Lucas, holding hands and laughing at something. *Seven...* He saw Dustin with his arm around El. *Six...* He swallowed hard. *Five...* He had

made up his mind. *Four...* His parents were way off. *Three...* And it would mean the world to Will. *Two...* Wonderful Will, whom he loved and who was his constant support. *One...* He looked down at his boyfriend, who was still staring happily at the fireworks. At that moment everyone shouted, “Happy New Year!” Mike took a deep breath and held Will’s face in his hands and kissed him. Will was clearly taken aback, but Mike could feel him smiling. It didn’t last long, but it was worth it for the way Will looked at him afterwards – a look of combined joy, curiosity and total love. The fireworks subsided and still no one was paying them any attention. Will pulled his headphones around his neck, staring up at Mike.

“Kiss me,” said Mike softly. Will turned to look over his shoulder.

“Really?”

Mike nodded. “No one’s looking. Besides, it’s a new decade.” He paused. “Maybe it’s the decade where I start being as brave as you.”

Notes for the Chapter:

As always, thanks for reading!

Please let me know if you enjoyed it, either in the comments or hit me up on Tumblr (@teaforoneplease)!